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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: Cross-Strait Relations

Summary: 1. Taiwan dailies June 14 focused mainly on domestic issues: flooding in Southern Taiwan, the government's plan to tax the rich, etc. The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times," however, focused on cross-Strait relations. It carried a banner headline on the front page that read "Premier Frank Hsieh Announced That The Government Will Authorize the Taipei Aviation Transportation Association and the Taiwan External Trade Development Council to arrange for negotiations with China on cross-Strait cargo flights and the sale of Taiwan agricultural products to China. "

2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, most newspapers focused on domestic issues, e.g. a possible correlation between tax reduction and birth rate, the wedding in Taiwan's first family, and the single constituency, two ballots system. But the pro-independence "Liberty Times" focused on cross-Strait relations and editorialized that the government as well as Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation should secure Taiwan's sovereignty, which is the foundation for any future negotiations with China. End summary.

A) "Securing Taiwan's Sovereignty As The Foundation For Any Negotiations [with China]"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000](06/14) editorialized:

". Chang Chun-hsiung, after taking the post as chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), pointed out that whether his foundation can resume talks with China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) is a difficult and complex question, and added that the [possibility of] talks involves the overall international situation as well as both sides across the Strait. It is a situation that Taiwan cannot act on alone. In other words, the resumption of cross-Strait talks between the SEF and the ARATS is a political question. The acknowledgement [of Chang] is rather correct. Over the past ten years, the cross-Strait situation as well as the international one has changed a lot. Could the 'white gloves' [SEF and ARATS] that both sides across the Strait set up carry the same function as before? It is indeed a good question.

"Everyone knows that SEF and ARATS carried out exchanges, e.g. the meeting between former SEF Chairman C.F. Koo and ARATS Chairman Wang Daohan in Singapore in 1993, due to the fact that both sides of the Strait were willing to 'set aside their disputes,' and to talk about routine affairs. China, however, has recently changed its attitude, and set up unacceptable preconditions for Taiwan to carry out cross-Strait contacts.

".It is not a simple cross-Strait problem since China has threatened Taiwan with military force, and has attempted to annex Taiwan's sovereignty. Neither is it a domestic problem for China, but an international one that involves several countries. There is a huge difference between China and Taiwan, and it would not be satisfactory for Taiwan to try to counter China by itself. It is Taiwan's special role to understand clearly its strategic position, and to deal with cross-Strait issues from a global perspective. Hence, Taiwan cannot rule out its international partners and act alone in its policy and behavior toward China. In that vein, unless China is willing to negotiate without preconditions in the future, the government as well the SEF should not push for negotiations. To insist on Taiwan-centered identity will be good enough."

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